

OFFICE OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES



**FY 04-05**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

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*Providing Opportunities for Columbia's  
Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Businesses*

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# Annual Report 2005

Office of Business Opportunities

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## THE OBO MISSION

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The mission of the Office of Business Opportunities (OBO) is to accelerate the viability and strategic growth of employment opportunities and Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (SWMBEs) by designing, facilitating, implementing, and promoting strategies to enhance, build capacity, and sustain productive opportunities through education and training, networking, increase access to contracts and capital, and support inclusive relationships between private and public sectors in the City of Columbia.

With new innovative programs and flourishing partnerships, the OBO continues to diligently serve as a liaison to the community, and impacting small businesses by linking businesses with the City of Columbia related opportunities and encouraging equal opportunity for all businesses and individuals in the Columbia workplace.

*The type of City we want to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on what we do today. We are becoming a more diverse community where being an entrepreneur is a challenging task...we must be an inclusive business culture that works together and grows together.*

**—Tony Lawton, Director**



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## FASTTRAC PROGRAM

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The OBO and Midlands Technical College partnered to introduce to the business community FastTrac Planning an 11-session comprehensive entrepreneur educational program developed by the

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which provides entrepreneurs with business insight, leadership skills and professional networking connections so they are prepared to expand and/or modify their existing business.

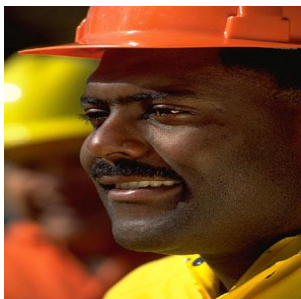
FastTrac Planning is a key element allowing existing businesses the opportunity to streamline their processes and analyze strengths and shortcomings.



*FastTrac Session One Graduates*

To date, twelve (12) small businesses have graduated from FastTrac. Those businesses include: Advantage Health Systems, Associate Contractors, Catering & Beyond, CGM Computer Consulting, Frames & Things Art Gallery, Gates Inspection, Maxim Communications Group, Inc., Merry Admin, North Main Deli, PBH Magazine, Tren Media Group, and TDI Graphic Design.

We are proud to be the first City in the state of South Carolina to graduate twelve (12) small businesses from the FastTrac Planning class.



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## SUB-CONTRACTING OUTREACH

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The OBO is committed to maximizing sub-contracting opportunities for all qualified and available firms. It is the policy of the City of Columbia to provide all sub-

contractors an equal opportunity to participate in the performance of City contracts. The Sub-Contracting Outreach program applies to City-funded construction projects of \$200,000 or more. One example of Sub-Contracting Outreach is the Drew Wellness Center project, which to-date has spent \$728, 111 with six (6) certified minority and women-owned sub-contractors.

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## CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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The OBO has partnered with the Construction Management Group in an effort to increase the expenditure opportunities with the SMWBEs enterprises in order to provide a growth in our economic development. Approved firms of the Construction Management program are selected for construction projects that are over \$200,000, but not more than \$2 million in value. The chosen firms are required to meet and/or exceed all subcontracting goals and outreach efforts required under the City's Subcontracting Outreach Program.



Through the Construction Management program the City of Columbia will maintain the ability to have quality services at competitive prices, and utilize SMWBEs within the City of Columbia in an effort to increase the diversity in the expenditures of procurement opportunities.

The following firms were approved to participate in a pilot program for Construction Management: Civil Engineering Consulting Services, Inc., Construction Dynamics, Inc., Construction Control Corporation DESA, Inc., Enviro AgScience, Inc., and LCK Construction Services.




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## MAKE ME A MATCH FORUM

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The OBO co-sponsored a “Make Me A Match” forum for SMWBEs on February 23, 2005 in partnership with the S.C. Minority Business Development Center.

The “Make Me A Match” Forum provided a list of upcoming City projects as well to businesses in attendance and identified additional firms to be given the opportunity to compete for City services and products. City department representatives/buyers were matched with sixty-seven (67) SMWBEs, which were provided opportunities to have an open exchange and network with twenty-five (25) City departments.




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## WORK INITIATIVE PROGRAM (WIP)

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The City of Columbia and Empowerment Zone’s workforce development initiative—**The Work Initiative Program.**

The success of WIP has been encouraging. To-date, one hundred twenty-five (125) participants have completed. During FY 04-05, forty-six (46) WIP students graduated, and the eighth class is scheduled to complete on July 29th. Through great partnerships WIP has positively touched the lives of hundreds of individuals. Everyone attending the mandatory three-day orientation instruction in two-hour workshop, Resource professionals attendees gain valuable employment application tips. Upon successful completion of official testing and orientation requirements, participants begin their 12-week training.



receives 12 hours of free math/reading; benefit from a facilitated by Human from around the City; knowledge for proper completion and job search

The training is a combination of contextual learning, soft skills workshops and specific trade skill demonstrations in brick masonry or carpentry. Corporate professionals conduct weekly soft skill workshops for self-development and career success. Participants learn the significance of hard work, reliable attendance, work ethics, honesty and other valuable factors that contribute to their success. Businesses/Employers have an equal opportunity to develop relationships with a pool of skilled potential employees.

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## SUMTER-COLUMBIA EMPOWERMENT ZONE

([WWW.SUMTERCOLUMBIAZONE.COM](http://WWW.SUMTERCOLUMBIAZONE.COM))

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### Workforce Employment Development Opportunity (WEDO)

The Columbia EZ is sponsoring two initiatives in partnership with non-profit organizations,



in which EZ residents will receive workforce development training. The WEDO program is designed to provide soft-skill job training for residents in two of the EZ most impoverished communities.

EZ Agreements with the **TN Development Corporation's P.O.W.E.R CENTER** (Providing Opportunities for Work by Empowering Residents), and **Beyond the Door, Inc.**, will provide training and job placements for over sixty (60) EZ residents of Oak Hill and Bethel Bishop-Chapelle apartments.

Programs such as the WEDO and WIP demonstrates that the City of Columbia and the Empowerment Zone is continuing on the path of being consistent in providing job creation opportunities for the residents of the EZ.



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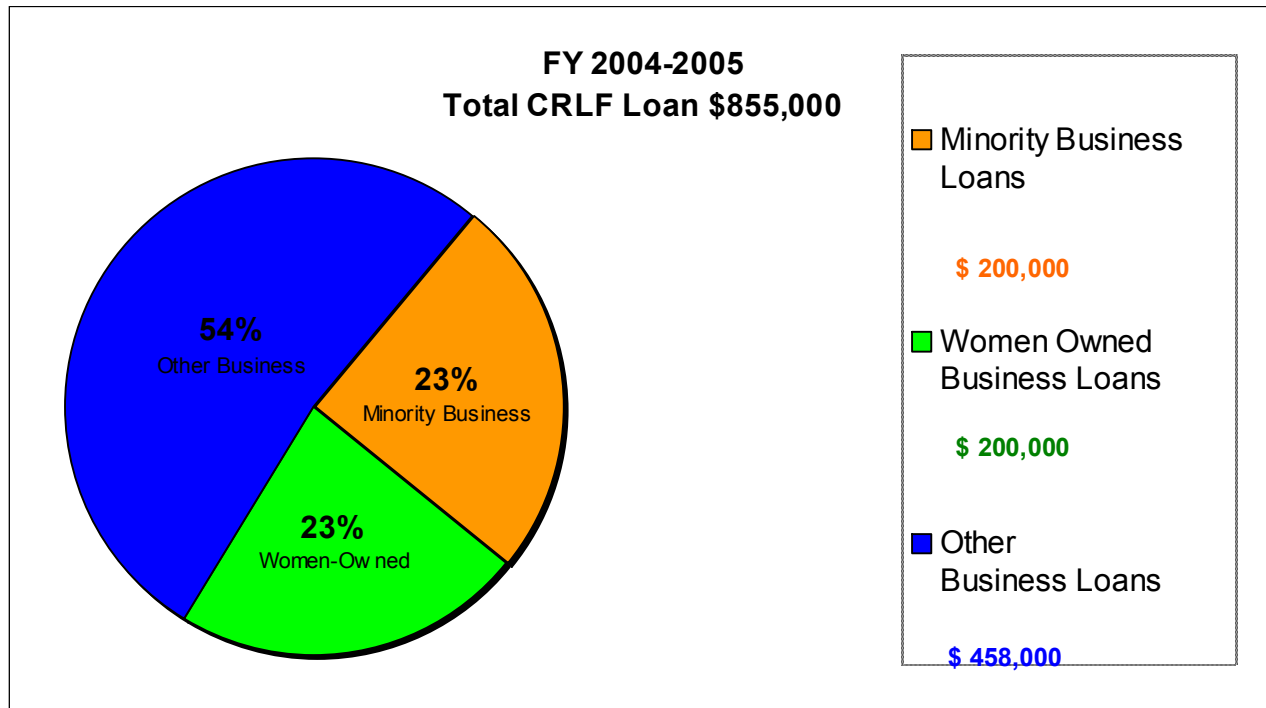
## COMMERCIAL REVOLVING LOAN FUND

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### Commercial Revolving Loan Fund

Five (5) commercial loans were funded through the Commercial Revolving Loans Fund (CRLF) representing \$855,000. Forty-six percent (46%) of the dollars loaned or a total of two (2) loans amounting to \$400,000 were granted to minority and women owned businesses. Of the \$855,000 or twenty-three percent (23%), was allocated to minority owned businesses, not including women and \$200,000 or twenty-three percent (23%) was allocated to women owned businesses, respectively.

CRLF LOANS	Minority/ Women-Owned Business Loans	Other Business Loans	Total CRLF Loans
Amount	\$ 400,000	\$ 458,000	\$ 855,000
Percentage	46%	54%	100%



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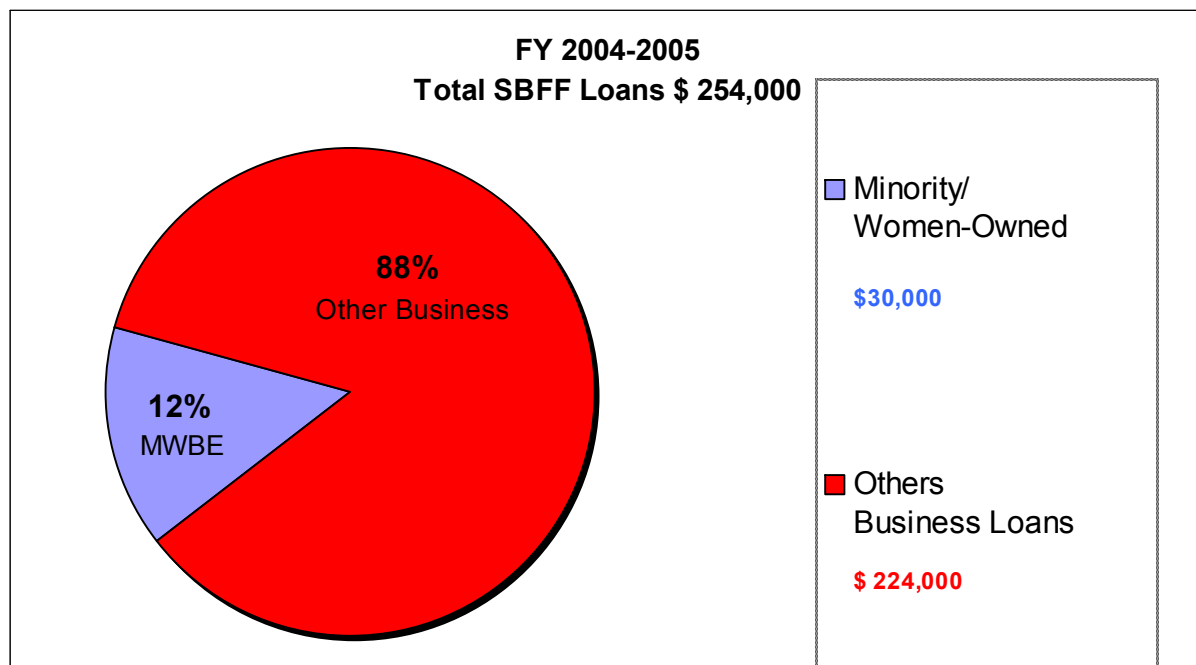
## SMALL BUSINESS FINANCING FUND

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### Small Business Financing Fund (EZ-SBFF)

Three (3) commercial loans were approved through the EZ Small Business Financing Fund (EZ-SBFF), representing \$254,000 twelve percent (12%) of the dollars loaned, or a total of one (1) loan amounting to \$30,000 was granted to minority and women owned businesses. Of the \$254,000 or twelve percent (12%) was allocated to minority owned businesses, including women.

SBFF Loans	MWBE Business Loans	Others Business Loans	Total SBFF Loans
Amount	\$ 30,000	\$ 224,000	\$ 254,000
Percentage	12%	88%	100%





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## TAX CREDITS & INCENTIVES

### EZ FACILITY BONDS AND NEW MARKET TAX CREDITS

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The Sumter-Columbia Empowerment Zone along with the Office of Business Opportunities launched an aggressive campaign to introduce millions of dollars in federal tax credits/incentives, Empowerment Zone Facility Bonds, and New Market Tax Credits to the Columbia business community.

There were over seven (7) tax credit/incentive workshops/seminars held and now more



businesses and tax professionals are aware of these valuable savings. We continued to inform manufacturers and small businesses of these opportunities. The South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (SCMEP) has been a great help to get the word out to manufacturers in the

Columbia area. There was one (1) economic development conference, which was held at the South Carolina State Museum on Thursday, December 2, 2004, Columbia's major private developers, investors, and bankers attended the conference. The focus of the conference was utilization of Enterprise Zone Facility Bonds and New Market Tax Credits for many commercial development opportunities in the Empowerment Zone. Our partners included Wachovia Bank, The Benjamin Law Firm, South Carolina Community Bank, Haynsworth, Sinkler, Boyd, P.A., New Markets Partners LLC, and First Citizens Bank.